

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5625

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: NA

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SUBJ: INTERVIEW WITH FARROUK KADDOUMI

1. SUMMARY. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH FALASTINE AL THAWRA ON OCTOBER 21, FARROUK KADDOUMI DOUBTED THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WOULD RECONVENE. HE SAID THAT THE U.S.-ISRAELI WORKING PAPER REPRESENTED "A CATASTROPHY FOR U.S. POLICY, BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED THAT THE ZIONIST LOBBY CAN MODIFY U.S. GUARANTEES." HE CLAIMED THE SOVIETS HAD EXPLICITLY LINKED MIDDLE EAST PEACE WITH PROGRESS ON SALT. HE ALSO INDICATED FORMATION OF A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE WAS NOT IMMINENT. THE KADDOUMI INTERVIEW IS ONE OF SEVERAL RECENT PALESTINIAN STATEMENTS SUGGESTING THAT THE PLO STRONGLY OPPOSES PARTICIPATING DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY AT GENEVA ON THE BASIS OF THE U.S.-ISRAELI WORKING PAPER. END SUMMARY.

2. THE OFFICIAL PLO NEWSPAPER FALASTINE AL THAWRA ON OCTOBER
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21 CARRIED A LENGTHY INTERVIEW WITH FARROUK KADDOUMI, HEAD OF THE PLO'S POLITICAL DEPARTMENT. KADDOUMI TOUCHED ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES AND, AS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY Wafa, MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. MANY PARTIES ARE ATTEMPTING "TO PUSH" THE PLO INTO ACCEPTING RESOLUTION 242. THE PLO, HOWEVER, "REJECTS" RESOLUTION 242

BECAUSE IT "DOES NOT DEAL WITH THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM." THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WILL PROBABLY NOT RECONVENE, AND "WE WILL NOT ATTEND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON THE BASIS OF 242."

B. "ZIONIST PRESSURE ON THE USA" HAD FORCED IT TO "BACK DOWN" FROM THE U.S.-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE. PRESIDENT CARTER'S U.N. SPEECH "WAS CONSIDERED A RETREAT FROM THE U.S.-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE." "OUR SOVIET FRIENDS SAID THE COMMUNIQUE MEANS A WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES," NOT SIMPLY FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

C. SECRETARY VANCE HAD PRESENTED A WORKING PAPER TO THE ARAB STATES, BUT "ZIONIST PRESSURES" HAD RESULTED IN THE FOLLOWING CHANGES IN THIS WORKING PAPER:

--"ELIMINATING THE PARAGRAPH CONCERNING THE PRESENCE OF SECOND-RANK PLO REPRESENTATIVES."

--"ELIMINATING ANY REFERENCE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY."

--"ELIMINATING REFERENCE TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WITH ALL ITS MEMBERS; AND CONSIDERING THE OPENING SESSION AS A PURELY FORMAL INITIAL MEETING, AFTER WHICH THE CONFERENCE WOULD SPLIT INTO GEOGRAPHIC AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEES."

--"REPLACING THE TERM 'DISCUSSION' WITH THE TERM 'NEGOTIATION,'" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(WITH REGARD TO THE BILATERAL ISRAELI-ARAB STATE WORKING GROUPS).

D. THE U.S.-ISRAELI WORKING PAPER REPRESENTS A "HUGE STEP BACKWARDS FROM THE U.S. STAND" AND IS A "CATASTROPHY FOR U.S. POLICY." U.S. COMMUNIQUE OR GUARANTEES CANNOT BE RELIED ON BECAUSE "THE ZIONIST LOBBY CAN MODIFY OR SUPERSEDE THEM."

E. THE SOVIETS MADE CLEAR IN TALKS WITH THE PLO THAT "THEY HAD COMBINED THEIR CARDS WITH OURS." THE SOVIETS ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THEIR "TWO MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE U.S. ARE THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS AND SALT, THE TWO BEING LINKED."

F. THE FORMATION OF A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE "WOULD BE NATURAL IF IT REPRESENTS THE END OF A PERIOD AND THE PRELUDE TO A NEW ONE. . . . WE DO NOT OBJECT TO A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, BUT IT CAN ONLY BE DECLARED AT THE SUITABLE TIME." THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND THE NATIONAL CONGRESS WILL CONSIDER SUCH A GOVERNMENT AND ENDORSE IT "IF THE ADVANTAGES OUTWEIGH THE DISADVANTAGES."

3. COMMENTS.

A. THE KADDOUMI INTERVIEW IS ONE OF SEVERAL RECENT PALESTINIAN STATEMENTS SUGGESTING THAT THE PLO STRONGLY OPPOSES PARTICIPATING DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY AT GENEVA ON THE BASIS OF THE U.S.-ISRAELI WORKING PAPER. IN ANOTHER INTERVIEW CARRIED BY MONDAY MORNING ON OCTOBER 24, FOR EXAMPLE, KADDOUMI SAID THAT "THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WILL NOT BE HELD THIS YEAR," JUDGING BY THE WORKING PAPER. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT "NOTHING SHORT OF PLO REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA IS ACCEPTABLE."

B. BOTH KADDOUMI INTERVIEWS EXPLICITLY CLAIM THE SOVIETS LINK A MIDDLE EAST PEACE WITH PROGRESS ON SALT. KADDOUMI TOLD MONDAY MORNING THAT THE U.S. HAD AGREED TO "THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS IN RETURN FOR A SOFTENING OF THE SOVIET POSITION ON SALT II."

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C. FINALLY, KADDOUMI'S COMMENTS SUGGEST THE PLO WILL NOT FORM A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE UNLESS PROSPECTS FOR A MAJOR POLITICAL BREAK-THROUGH ARE IMMINENT. HE MAKES CLEAR THAT AT A MINIMUM THE PNC WOULD HAVE TO RATIFY SUCH A GOVERNMENT.

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